REV. DR. STORRS'S SERMON

BEFORE THE

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS,

PREACHED AT CLEVELAND

OCTOBER 1, 1861.

The "Things which are not:" God's chosen instruments for advancing His Kingdom.

A SERMON,

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AT THEIR

FIFTY-SECOND ANNUAL MEETING.

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SERMON.

1 Corinthians, 1 : 28, (last clause.)

"Yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are."

This clause contains a complete thought, and suggests to us a theme rich enough, large enough, to engage and reward our evening's meditation. It is proper, therefore, to single it out from the others with which it stands associated, and to make it the subject of our discourse. And yet, in so separating it, we must not sacrifice the peculiar significance and the added impressiveness which it derives from its position, or the light which is cast on it by its companions. It is the last of a series of clauses, of which each that precedes it prepares the way for it, and by natural progress leads the mind toward it. And it is only when we view it at the head of this series, as summing up and surpassing the previous clauses, that we precisely discern and wholly appreciate its scope and meaning.

"For ye see your calling, brethren," says the Apostle; "how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." The foolish and the weak, the base and the despised things—it is only natural that from the last

and lowest of these, the things which are noticed only to be contemned, the Apostle should step to the things which are not; that is, which have either no existence, except in germ or mere possibility, or certainly no existence that is recognised by mankind; which arrest no thought, excite no fear, and are not prominent enough to be scorned. And these things, he says, the Lord hath chosen—these things which seem still weaker than the weakest, and whose very being appears but a dream of the imaginative enthusiast—THESE things hath he chosen, to bring to nought the THINGS THAT ARE; the great institutions, establishments, forces, which mark or mould the constitution of society. He hath chosen them for this purpose, to the end that his name may be magnified by their agency, and his glory be revealed in their ultimate triumph. He is able to bring them to success and to victory, to human thought non-existent as they are, because his foolishness is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. And when it is done, no flesh shall be able to glory in his presence.

How complete is the climax to which we are brought, as we thus view the passage! How sharply discriminated from those that attend it, is the thought which is contained in these last words! And how fruitful and wide is the field which it opens to our survey! It is a thought, too, peculiar to the Gospel; and which for that reason the better befits an occasion wholly devoted, as this is, to conference concerning its further advancement.

That the "Things which are," at any time, in human society, however venerable, however strong, are always liable to be displaced by others, which were not in existence, or were not of recognised importance and power, when the former were established, but which subsequently and often suddenly are brought to developement and mastery; that thus the aspects of society and history are continually changing, and each successive form of civilization is likely in its turn to give place

to another, into whose life its own may be absorbed, but under whose differences it is buried:—these are facts familiar as any fact of nature; which impress immediately the most careless observer; to question which, with so many annals before us, crowded with thick reports of change, were like denying the atmosphere itself. That the movement which thus is constantly going on, through the centuries, around the world, is on the whole a movement for the better; that the "Things which are not," so far as men's earlier knowledge is concerned, which exist but in embryo, and are only to be developed by a keener observation, or a more profound and exhaustive experience, are yet usually superior to the things which precede them, and more replete with a vitalizing energy; that thus each industrious and thoughtful community is likely to surpass in its later years the attainments of its earlier, and the race itself to be gradually enriched, invigorated, and elevated, as the centuries proceed:—these also are facts which modern history clearly illustrates, and which, without any indiscreet optimism, we may gratefully accept. But that these things of which the age that is at any time knows not and dreams not,—these powers which exist in it only in germ, and which make no appeal either to its hopes or its sensitive fears,—that these, while hidden so remotely from man, are all the time present to the mind of the Most High; that they are indeed his pre-ordained instruments, not only for working the changes which shall come in the aspects or in the life of Society, but for the higher, grander purpose of establishing supremely His Kingdom in the world; that he has incorporated their unseen elements with the system of things in order that ultimately he may use them in this office, and make them auxiliaries in subjecting the world to his truth and his Son:—these are facts the declaration of which is peculiar to our Religion; yet which it not only affirms with authority, but exhibits and demonstrates, in its actual advancement toward the conquest of the

Earth; and which it offers to every believer—to us who are here assembled this evening—as a basis on which to found the assurance of its ultimate triumph.

So here, as every where, does Christianity vindicate its origin in God's mind, by placing us at once upon the highest levels of truth, and opening to our minds the widest range for reflection. And the words of the Apostle, holding in them a principle so specific and profound, present to us a theme appropriate and adequate to our present occasion.

To this theme, therefore, Fathers and Brethren, I invite your attention: THE "THINGS WHICH ARE NOT,"—which are not recognised by man, and which subsequent times alone are to develope into power and mastery — THESE ARE FROM THE FIRST GOD'S CHOSEN INSTRUMENTS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF HIS KINGDOM IN THE WORLD. If this be true, the relations of the fact to the character, power, and government of God, and the bearings of the fact on our Missionary enterprise, will indicate themselves to all our minds.

That we may get the thought fully before us, as it lay at first in the mind of the Apostle, and may receive the perfect impression of those illustrations of its truth which were given in the centuries that succeeded, let us call before us in rapid review the scenes amid which the text was written, and then the events which became its immediate and complete vindication.—It was written, you remember, from that delightful and populous city planted by the Ionian colony on the hills overlooking 'the Asian meadows,' along the Cayster. In this city of Ephesus, important and peculiar, partly Greek but still more Oriental in its manners and spirit, the metropolis of a province, and with a commerce that drew to its wharves the representatives of all nations, in which schools of philosophy seem so much to have abounded that one of them was opened to Paul for his labors, yet in which the Eastern superstitions

and magic darkly and haughtily confronted philosophy, and still had a power which they had not either at Athens or at Rome,—in this city, the remains of whose magnificent theatre yet strew the ground in colossal confusion, and above which then shone in splendid beauty the Temple of Diana, whose graceful colonnades first revealed the full beauty of the Ionic style, and whose columns of jasper still perpetuate among men the vision of its glory,—in this city where the East and the West were commingled, and within whose spacious walls and harbor was assembled so busy and so various a life,—it was natural that the Apostle, coming westward from Antioch, should tarry for a time, that he might there proclaim the Gospel. And so he abode there for more than two years, and from thence he wrote the epistle before us.

It was written to Corinth; that wealthier, more brilliant, and more luxurious town, planted upon the celebrated Greek Isthmus, and by its position attracting the trade not only of Greece, but of all the countries whose shores were washed by either of the seas between whose almost meeting waves it fortunately stood; above which arose in austere grandeur the precipitous heights of the Acro-Corinthus; around which was spread the loveliest beauty of the land and the water; whose architecture was unrivalled, even in Greece, in its sumptuous elegance; in whose streets all arts that skill could gain, and all the gifts that commerce could bring, were equally at home; and yet whose manners were so licentious that even in that gross pagan age its very name was a synonyme for vice, and that from it went a constant influence which defiled and demoralized wheresoever it touched.—To the Christians in this city Paul wrote from Ephesus the letter which contains the declaration of the text.

In effect, therefore, he had before him while writing the whole expanse of the Mediterranean; that 'many-nationed' sea, still full of interest to us and our times, but which was to

the old world what all the oceans are to ours; yea, more than this: which was not only the cradle and school of its maritime enterprise, and the scene of its naval strifes and conquests, but the constant centre of its most powerful civilizations; around which were grouped, as if by a force as necessary as that which forms the crystal around its axis, all the arts and the empires then most prominent in the world, or which now most attract and influence our minds. Upon or near the shores of this sea, the labors of Paul were constantly performed. Born within sight of it, his whole after life clung to it. In all his incessant missionary tours he scarcely left it; but at Cæsarea, Antioch, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Rome, perhaps still further to the gates of the Atlantic, he had it before him, and strove with all the energy of his will, inspired and sustained by his Christian enthusiasm, to stud its shores with Christian churches, and to make it a centre of the kingdom of God and his Son in the world.

It is evident then, at once, from this point of view, what were the institutions which Paul describes as "THINGS THAT ARE:" the great established powers in society, which withstood, or at least did not harmonize with, the extension of Christianity. And upon these things, that we may receive the full impression of the truth which he uttered, it is needful that we pause; till we feel in part the vast strength they possessed; till we see in a measure the 'hiding of their power.' Then better may we estimate, in comparison with them, the obscure, undeveloped, and unrecognised forces, by which in God's plan, and in the interest of His kingdom, they were all to be destroyed.

Foremost among these "Things that are"—these powerful institutes of the day of the Apostle, opposed to Christianity—we must reckon, of course, that haughty JUDAISM, dogmatic and secular, imperious in its claims and impatient in its hopes,

into which the religion given by God to the people of his election had by degrees been transformed, and which now had the seat of its dominion in Palestine, but the outposts of its influence in many cities of the Empire. Into collision and controversy with this, Christianity came at the very beginning: since the more essentially harmonious it was with the ancient religion truly interpreted, the more positive and vehement was the contest urged against it by that arrogant system which now clothed itself in the robes and occupied the place of Moses and the Prophets; a system not content to be recognised and honored as Divine in its sphere, yet introductory to a higher, but claiming for itself to be final and universal, and challenging for its own supremacy in the world. Unconscious of imperfection, and intolerant of change, this bred a temper domineering and defiant in those who adhered to it toward all other faiths, but most of all toward the faith which adored a crucified Nazarene. And immediately, continually, in every city, and in almost each village, it met the Apostle; at Ephesus or at Corinth, no less than at Jerusalem; among his own kindred, as well as among strangers. It lay in wait for him by stealth, and assailed him with violence. More often far than it touched his person, it overshadowed and darkened his thoughts. And always it fronted him as an urgent, ancient, and inveterate Power, enthroned supreme among his own nation—the most religious of the peoples of the earth—and systematically withstanding, with all its energy, the advance of Christianity.

It is one of the most significant illustrations of the drift of human nature—this character of Judaism in the day of the Apostle, and the position it assumed toward the doctrines he proclaimed. Ennobled and vitalised as it had been at the beginning, by the supreme truth of the being of God, eternal and holy, almighty and wise, the creator, moral governor, and judge of the Universe; receiving a yet mightier practical

impressiveness from the discoveries which it made of his presence and providence, and of his perfect law; becoming pervaded through and through with a divine glory, as it showed to men something of his heavenly empire, rehearsed the history of his dealings with mankind, and even unfolded through prophecy and psalm the scope and splendor of his purposes of love; bringing all these manifold elements of power into contact with men, through a mechanism of worship unequalled in its majesty, and its fitness to its end:—the religion of the Hebrews was intrinsically adapted, not only above all other religions, but to the highest degree then possible, to educate the mind, to stimulate the conscience, to implant and develope the holiest affections, and to make the nation which had its oracles for their constant possession the purest, noblest, and most devout on the earth. No other result of it could have been anticipated by those who should have assumed as an axiom the moral integrity or the moral indifference of the nature of man. And doubtless such effects, through the grace of the Spirit, were realized in many, whose faces now glow in the vision of Christ.

Yet from this religion the nation had early and persistently swung away, into grossest idolatries; reproducing in gold the Egyptian Apis beneath the very pavement of sapphire on which the feet of God were treading above the mount; in their subsequent history, polluting the hills which looked out upon Jerusalem with the fury and lust of sacrilegious observances. And when they had at length been driven out of these, by the stern words of preachers and the sterner strokes of providential visitation, — when Assyrian oppressions, fulfilling God's plans, had forced them to a new recognition of Him, and made them loathe at last the idolatries whose cruel craft had so torn and despoiled them,—they only turned their religion to an occasion of pride, and nurtured beneath it the very arrogance and ambition which it was especially designed to subdue. Its

mystic, high, and moving truths, the venerable associations it derived from antiquity, the precious and kindling memories of the Fathers by which it was consecrated, the wonderful interventions of God in providence by which so often it had been vindicated or rescued, the unique impressiveness of the ceremonies and offices by which it had been conveyed through the ages, the resplendent array of miracles which it wore as the breastplate of gems and the golden mitre on the front of its records, the very endurance and faith of the martyrs who had died beneath the hands of rulers or people in allegiance to it—all were together perverted by the Jews to minister more abundantly to their national pride, and to make them less willing to receive the Messiah whom from the beginning their religion had foreshadowed, unless He should come as a conquering Prince, reigning visibly at Jerusalem, and carrying his ensigns with squadrons and navies to the ends of the earth.

This influence had now for many generations been working in the nation; and, as we know, it had reached its climax when Paul was proclaiming Christianity in the world. The very political calamities of the Jews, stinging and irritating their unsubmissive minds, had only intensified their fanatical expectation of victory through their ritual and law; had only exasperated their scorn of a Messiah who should seek to rule by the truth and by love. The partial successes which they had realized,—in establishing synagogues in many of the cities to which their restless enterprise had impelled them, in gaining numerous proselytes from the heathen, in compelling the admiration of some of the higher philosophical minds for the grand simplicity in which their faith contrasted the mythologies, in adapting through the Alexandrian school their doctrines and rules to the language, and even in some degree to the spirit of the Greeks,—these had still further invigorated the tendency. And so they stood, divided among themselves in many particulars, yet unanimous in a fierce hostility to the

Gospel :—the Sadducees denying angels and the resurrection, and almost it would seem the existence of the soul, as independent of the body, while still holding among them the office of high-priest, and some posts of chief influence in the national Council; the Pharisees superadding their traditions to the law, and austerely exacting the most rigorous and literal observance of both, in disregard often of the obvious principles of equity and of charity; the Essenes delighting in pietistic seclusion and remote meditations; the Herodians affecting foreign manners, and maintaining the supreme authority of the civil ruler in matters of religion:—yet all agreed and unitedly zealous in expecting the propagation, by conquest of arms, of their ancient faith, and all contemning the religion of Jesus. It was to them not only a radical heresy and schism in their national church; it involved what seemed to them a national suicide, the final extinction of hopes they had cherished until they had come to be part of their life.

So Judaism confronted Paul; a perverted system, whose ancient glory now only gave energy to its ambitious plans, and its hatred and defiance of the Gospel he preached. Possessing the strength derived from great truths, it used that strength relentlessly against him. Retaining for its service a magnificent ritual, ordained of God, it sought to make that a sheet of flame to consume the fruits of all his teachings. Error and verity were so intermingled in its practical frame, piety and pride were so combined beneath its influence, the lust of conquest had blended so intimately with religious veneration, that resistance to Christ seemed now to the Jew a matter of conscience, and his fiercest passions had the sanction of his religion. Inevitably, therefore, by the essential contrariety of its tendency and temper, this was the first antagonist of the Gospel; its first, and also in some respects its most effective and dangerous. It surrounded Paul in the synagogues. It even entered the churches. Peter himself, and many of the Christ-

ians, yielded at intervals to its vast influence; and, with an extraordinary tenacity of life, where it seemed altogether subdued and obliterated, it still persistently reäppeared. So stubborn in its spirit, so thorough in its discipline, so fanatical in its zeal, and so fortressed with strength on every side, it was only the prescience of an inspired apostle, and only the utmost courage of a will insphered as was Paul's in the will of the Most High, that could have predicted its absolute overthrow.

And second in the order of these "Things that are,"—these powerful institutes of the day of the Apostle, opposed to Christianity — must be reckoned of course the HEATHENISM which prevailed outside of the Jews among all nations; which confronted Paul every where, ancient as man, but still vigorous in strength, imperial in place, and arrayed in universal opposition to the Gospel.—The extent of this, a glance reveals to us. But how mighty it was, he knew and saw more clearly than we can.

It is difficult for any man to appreciate the strength of religious attachments which he does not share; difficult for the Protestant to do complete justice to the mind of the Romanist, or, on the other hand, for the Romanist to understand the spiritual power of the faith of the Protestant. The Huguenot and the Papist were thus dissevered in France; and the Tyrolese peasant is separated to-day from the disciple of him who taught at Geneva, by chasms more deep than the Alpine crevasses. Most of all is it difficult for one educated from childhood beneath the light of the Gospel, accustomed to its discoveries of God, its holy precepts and benign invitations, and its majestic, immortal promises, to understand the power of Heathenism over those who have known no other religion, whose earliest thoughts have been modified by it, and all whose temper and habits of life have been formed and matured beneath its impressions. And not even he who has learned this hard

lesson, — not even the most observant missionary who has passed his life in the midst of Heathenism, as it now exists in India for example, or the islands of the Pacific, who has seen it he thinks in its whole omnipresent and voluminous power, surrounding the minds of a people like an atmosphere, inhaled anew with every breath, and mingling itself incessantly and inseparably with the currents of their life and the frame of their being,—not even he can appreciate the power which the antique forms of Heathenism had, when as yet no purer religion contrasted them on earth, except the incomplete and distasteful religion of the unhonored Jews; when the foremost and most cultivated nations of the earth were as ardent in the maintainance of these forms of religion as the most uncivilized, and were only more stately, elaborate, and ingenious in their details of worship; when every art and all agencies of commerce were auxiliary to them, all literature was full of them, and all statesmanship was their servant; when, in a word, Heathenism in some form was the common law and the common life of the inhabited World. It was at this time that Paul confronted it, at Ephesus and at Corinth, around the whole sweep of the Mediterranean. And though we cannot know as he did how immense and overwhelming a power it was, yet we, I think, may perceive this in part if we consider some obvious facts.

First of all, then, it is to be recognised by us that this Heathenism which so withstood Christianity was not an altogether artificial system in any nation; that it grew out of real and even deep motions in the general mind, and was not in its substance a matter of chance or a creature of contrivance, least of all an arbitrary and fabricated arrangement either of state-craft or of priest-craft; nay, that it had a certain real moral life in it, and was related not to depraved desire alone, to the lust and the pride which it never denied and too often deified, but related also, however insufficiently, to needs which the soul always

feels to be inmost and knows to be abiding. Its answer was a vain one, but it sought to *give* an answer, to questions which never since the exile from Eden have ceased profoundly to agitate the race. Unconscious prophecies of better things lurked in many of its forms, and in some of its traditions. There were thoughts in it that had drifted down, as has been said, as 'planks from the wreck of Paradise.' Its sacrifices were efforts to stanneh the flow from bleeding hearts. And while the popular mind acknowledged chiefly the hold of its ceremonies and shows, the thoughtful found also some solace or stimulus in its sublimated legends.

Then further it must be noticed that as existing in any nation it took the form most germane to that people, to its genius and spirit, to its circumstances and habits; and that every where it allied itself with whatever was strongest, whatever most impressed and attracted men's minds. Thus in Greece, from the first, it enshrined itself in Art; made eloquence its advocate; was indebted for the memorable form which it assumed to the noble poetry in which its mythologies were melodiously uttered. It was there at the same time a philosophy for the studious, a cloister for the religious, a splendid spectacle and continual entertainment for the excitable populace. In Egypt, on the other hand, it folded around it the solemn gloom of those austere and mystic legends which told of the destruction of Osiris by Typhon, or traced in long unfolding terrors, on the walls of the sealed and unsunned tomb, the path of the spirit from its birth to its judgment. In Rome, the same power allied itself with politics, became a military force, selected and blessed the standards of the army, added sanctions to the laws, and apotheosized the emperor. While eastward in Assyria, it subsided to a sluggish and luxurious developement, as it touched the plains whose wealth fed empires, and whose teeming tilth gave license to indolence. Every where, with spontaneous flexibility and precision, the special form of the Heathenism which

prevailed was fitted to the needs and the temper of the people; adjusting itself to these as exactly as did the fleet and melting sea-wave to the cliffs and crags or the smooth sand-reaches against which in mobile might it played.

Still further we must remember that in no land was this recent; in none was it devoid of that dignity and authority which were derived from a high antiquity; while to all the peoples, in proportion to their advancement, it was associated with whatever was to them most renowned and inspiring in their history. Their early benefactors and eminent chieftains had been deified by it. It bridged the interval between their times and the Golden Age. It was signalized by connection with all their inspiriting national successes. It was under the benediction, as he fondly believed, of his ancestral gods that the Greek had fought at Marathon and Platæa. From the brazen spoils of the former of these victories the colossal statue of Minerva had been wrought, which, flashing afar from the summit of the Acropolis, seemed to keep perpetual ward over the consecrated city and scene. It was the god Pan who, in the terrible clash of Platæa, overwhelming the Persians with sudden fright as his voice of thunder broke on them from the air, had delivered the nation in the crisis of its peril, and made the word 'panic' thenceforth an inheritance of the speech of mankind. So with all that was majestic and delightful in the past—and we must not forget that the nations of the old world looked back into the past far more fondly than we do, whose eyes, by Christianity, have been turned with a higher expectation toward the future,—with all that was charming and inspiring in their past, their religion was identified. It came to them consecrated by the memories most precious. It was dear to them as the bond which connected their life with heroic ages; which knit them to those great Fathers of the State who had learned from the gods their secrets of power as they walked with them familiarly in the morning of time.

And yet further, we must remember that diverse as were the forms of Heathenism which severally obtained among the nations, no one of them was essentially isolated from or discordant with the others around it; that the Greek might find much which to him was familiar in the worships of the East; that the Roman had no difficulty in opening his Pantheon to any god of all the tribes, in giving as Gibbon says "the freedom of the city" to all divinities; that, as matter of fact, the interchanges of commerce were continually bringing the different idolatries to blend with each other; and that when Alexander, in his rapid conquests, carried the Hellenic arts and influence over the East, the Western and Oriental heathenisms commingled, with ready affinities, to a singular extent. Thus all became modified, expanded, invigorated; and each, without losing its local prestige, derived a fresh access of strength from the others. In that very temple of Diana at Ephesus, beneath whose shadow Paul was writing, while the shrine was in all its conception Greek, and in all its execution, of the loveliest of Greek styles, the image within was not the statue which a student of Phidias or Praxiteles would have chiseled, of her who hunted with flying nymphs on Arcadian hills, instinct with a vivid virginal authority; it was a crude rough image of wood, like those still seen in Eastern temples—below, a simple pointed block covered with mystic animal figures, above, a mass of many breasts.

So it was then, in part, that Heathenism had power and supremacy on earth in the day of St. Paul; a power incomparable by that which it now has among any people; a supremacy almost literally unquestioned. It covered the earth, embosomed in its influence all ranks and vocations, moulded every institution, infiltrated its forces into every thing human. Springing out of the heart and mind of mankind, it had in turn, from its place of power, wrought these to its likeness, and toned them to an absolute sympathy with itself. It touched

every class, and had its appeal for every person; from the Sybarite to the Stoic; from the profligate Alcibiades, to Socrates who seemed almost a forerunner of the Lord. The philosopher might sneer at it, but even he infused into it an esoteric significance which dignified and endeared it to himself and his pupils. The popular mind absorbed it greedily, and was pervaded in every fibre by its impression. Its infinite complication of fancies and myths was to those who lived under it a spiritual system, as real as life, as vast as the skies, yet as near their souls as friendship or hope. Through it the living forces of nature, personified and familiarized, seemed to leap forth to greet the shepherd or the sailor. Through it the spirits of their dead ancestors seemed to the citizens invisibly but really to brood over and assist their troubled minds and perilled fortunes. Above all, through it the vast Unknown, the something Infinite and Enduring, of which the heavens gave them witness, which inarticulately encircled their life, shedding on it at once a shadow and a gleam,—the Unspeakable Power, which as Paul saw at Athens, when looking on their pathetic altars, they 'ignorantly worshipped,' and to which the Romans were wont formally to pray when the shuddering undulations of the earthquake surprised them — this seemed to them brought nearer their souls, and almost made palpable to their imaginations.

Heathenism to many had thus the sacredness of a Faith. It was felt a real infidelity to deny it; a kind of atheism, from which sensitive men shrunk then as now, as from a denial of man's great birthright, a piercing confession of spiritual orphanage. And the religion which thus grappled and held them by manifold ties, which engaged to itself on every side their affections and passions, and intermingled its subtile influence with all their letters, laws, and thoughts, had become the very life of their life to all the nations; till it was in fact attempting to remould their nature to disturb it.—Prœmi-

nently, too, in the century of Paul, when the prevalent forms of civilization were seen to have culminated, and when a shadowy but jealous unrest was invading men's minds and troubling their wills, a reäction had commenced toward the old forms of faith. It revealed itself widely, in new ardors of devotion. It questioned the tendencies of philosophical teaching. It had risen in some to a fanatical zeal, which sent them forth to encourage or enkindle the like in others; so that heathenism had begun to be preached as well as cherished, and instances of conversion to the worship of the gods were exultingly chronicled. The 'Revival of Heathenism,' it might properly be called; and all the ancient fire of the system was stirring beneath and bursting through the smouldering embers, and preparing to spread itself with an all new energy.

This was not either a "hurtless fire." The passions of men, which in its divorce of morality from religion, were all fostered by Heathenism: the sensual lusts, which for those who were ensnared by them it hallowed and honored as a service to the gods; the cruelty, falsehood, and tyrannous self-will, of which it exalted the patterns to the heavens, and made its divinities the most signal examples;—all these, not less than the more gentle sentiments, were the allies of its might, now aroused for its defence. To assail it was to start these multiform, envenomed, and many-fanged passions to the deadliest resistance; so that Paul well knew, what history had shown, what history afterward more fearfully illustrated, that when the hour of contest came there was no weapon in all the armory of human craft and human rage that would not be enlisted on the side of these religions; that the shouting amphitheatre would be stilled before the agonies of those torn by their beasts; that the darkness of night would be lurid with the glare of their pitch-robed and burning victims!

And yet, in view of all this it was that the dauntless Apostle unflinchingly affirmed that this whole Heathenism, so vast

and various, so philosophic, poetic, and sensual by turns, so ancient, so haughty, so cruel and passionate, and so replete with resources, should be shattered and exiled, and forever obliterated, by the "Things which were not."

There remains then but one other, a third thing, to be recognised as standing among the "Things that are"—the powerful institutes and establishments of society, opposed to Christianity—when Paul was writing from Ephesus to Corinth. But this was also the most powerful of all; the most dangerous to assail, to human view the most inaccessible to change or decay; supreme over every force that could touch it, and comparing with them all as the Mediterranean with the restless streams which sought and sank into it. It was, of course, the AUTHORITY AND POWER OF IMPERIAL ROME. Immense in extent, immeasurable in energy, this was also so completely subordinated to Heathenism, so entirely impregnated and energized by its spirit, that the Gospel could no more advance to its dominion without its conversion or without its destruction, than light can break through seven-fold walls, or the brook can leap the mountain-chain. This, therefore, must be reckoned, last and grandest, among the things that met the Apostle as those which in the interest of God's kingdom, and in the development of His purposes for it, should be utterly, finally, 'brought to nought.'

It was hardly as yet at its uttermost height, this Imperial power; for scores of years still slowly passed before that age of Trajan and the Antonines which marked its consummate might and splendor; while it was later even than this that Severus carried his victorious arms to Ctesiphon and Selencia, transferred the entire legislative power from the Senate to himself, and scattered the profuse memorials of his reign over Africa and the East. But already had Julius Cæsar, first of generals and foremost of statesmen, by natural force the leading man of all

his world, laid the first courses of that immense structure in which others after him were to perpetuate his name, and without his genius to outrun his plans. Already had Augustus, with marvellous tact, dissimulation and ability, overcoming all obstacles and destroying all rivals, raised himself by sure steps to the empire of the world. While retaining artfully some forms of the Republic he had centralized all authority in his will, being recognised successively as General, Emperor, Supreme Pontiff, and Censor. He had adorned with the spoils of every land, and had almost rebuilt, the imperial city; had added other regions and peoples to the empire; had disciplined the troops, tranquilized the provinces, and given to the world an unaccustomed peace; and he had fostered the brilliant literature which is the superb and imperishable crown of that whole age which bears his name. He had been enthroned for forty-five years on the Palatine hill; had been worshipped during life in some cities of the empire; and, after his death, had been raised by the solemn decree of the Senate to the rank of a God.

The 'dark and unrelenting' Tiberius who followed him, Caligula, Claudius, and now at last Nero, in front of whose stupendous tyranny, just ripening to its fulness, the Apostle was writing, had successively inherited and abused his prerogatives; and their absolute power had been only confirmed by time and use. Nay, even their unspeakable cruelty and lust, by continually exciting the fears of the people, and as continually debasing their character, had but cemented into more solid strength the fabric of that unparalleled domination whose foundations had been laid by a genius so rare, a sagacity so sure, and a courage so complete.

And so was this empire now exhibited to Paul, encircling the sea which was the centre of his thoughts, from Carthage to Alexandria, from Alexandria to Ephesus, and on to the very pillars of Hercules; with no sign of weakness and with

no shade of fear on all its frame; full, on the other hand, of the most intense and commanding vitality; the vigor of youth blending in its life with the disciplined craft which was the slow growth of ages; its organization the most perfect of Time; its wealth the most ample; its military system the most exact and effective; its renown the most various; its ambition as unbounded as if conquest were a novelty, and the stream of the Rubicon still was its limit. Its name was a terror to the wildest barbarians, while scholars rejoiced in the letters which it cherished. The armies, to which it had given a name that signified of itself their constant practice and incessant activity, were arrayed over the earth at each point of command, from the Indus to the Tweed, from the shores of Scandinavia to the Libyan sands. Their helmets flashed in the streets of each city. Their iron-beaked galleys, from Misenum or Ravenna, were ready at a word to dart to the onset against every foe. The British woods and the Assyrian plains were equally familiar with their triumphing standards.

The hundred millions of inhabitants of the Empire, from whom these armies were evermore reïnforced, though not indeed pervaded by any strong principle of inward unity, were yet by no means merely encircled by a brazen ring of military force. Their obedience was in large part voluntary and stable. They were actually and strongly bound to the metropolis; by admiration of its splendor, as well as awe of its power; by the tolerance in each province of the local religion, and to some extent of the local law; by the Roman colonies, which were pushed in all directions after the arms which had opened the way for them; by the admission to citizenship of those provincials who most desired and most had deserved it; by the comparative immunity which certainly was given them from the yet more capricious and unendurable tyranny of the smaller despots whom Rome displaced. Thus, in the structure of this wonderful and vast

establishment of government, while at home as I have said the lingering forms of the antique Republic still vailed the might of a perfect autocracy, in the provinces was combined some shadow at least of the federative principle with the power of a complete and irresponsible despotism. The great roads that radiated in every direction from the golden milestone within the forum — crossing or even piercing the hills, and bridging the ravines, with an imperial disregard of all natural obstacles—were arteries along which flowed constant circulations from the heart to the extremities. The characteristic productions of each region became gradually dispersed and domesticated in others. And Commerce, Religion, Letters, Law, wove each its strand into that immense and magnificent girdle with which the earth was well-nigh encircled.

In comparison of this Empire, therefore, all others had been feeble. The Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian monarchies, at their largest extent, had been beside it but fragmentary domains, as one by one they all became its tributary provinces. Before its unwaning and unshaken majesty, the brief empire of Alexander shone in History only as the meteor contrasting the sun. There have been prodigious empires since; of Charlemagne or Napoleon; of Timur or the Turks; but they never at any time have approximated this. No term descriptive of extension represents it, if it indicate less than a universality commensurate with the then existing civilizations. To speak of it as colossal, is to fall far below the just height of its demands; for the will of its Emperor was an earthly omnipotence. To resist it, was like crowding a continent from its place. To escape it, was almost like jumping from the planet. When more than once the slaves rose against it, multitudinous as they were, of blood as eager as their masters', letting slip at them its legions it crushed them as the avalanche crushes the cottage. When the Northern tribes dashed tumultuously against it, those hardy tribes whose chieftains boasted that for

fourteen years they had slept beneath no roof lower than the sky, under Marcus Antoninus it pressed them back to their fastnesses and forests with a force as irresistible as of mountains upheaving. The emulous and chivalric Grecian spirit had quailed before it in a hopeless despondency, and now from Mount Hæmus to the Laconian gulf was its suppliant vassal. The sombre and haughty Egyptian genius, which had once built Thebes, and Memphis, and On, and had shadowed the Nile with the statues of Rameses, was bruised to the dust beneath its more stately and imperious tread. Even Jewish stubbornness and fanatical pride, proverbial through the world, had been crushed and quelled in the grasp of its legions; and the castle of Antonia, commanding the Temple, was but one of the eyries from which looked down on a subjugated world its dominating eagles.

Considering its history, considering its growth, it seemed hardly so much a construction of man, this Empire of Rome, as one of the pre-ordained elements of nature; reaching in its exhaustive roots to the centres of history, and draining the earth to give it nutriment; increasing with a steadiness, and an immeasurable might, which no mere art or generalship could have given; in its production therefore resistible by no agencies, and in the result as indestructible by assault as Lebanon or the Apennines. Nay, it seemed hardly so much a power terrestrial, in its amazing and terrific augmentation—to the imaginative student contemplating its wonders, it still sometimes presents itself in History, hardly so much a power terrestrial—as a drear and vast Fate; impersonal, immense; long-slumbering and inert, but expanding itself rapidly from portentous beginnings as Christianity came near; spreading over the heavens, infolding the earth, locking liberty in paralysis, while giving an almost demoniac power to its auxiliary minds; combining all conquering passions and powers in one ultimate aggregate, and descending beyond help on the overwhelmed nations!

So it stood before Paul, as at Ephesus he saw it, as every where he met it, as he knew and felt it environing the earth. And so long as it remained undestroyed, unchanged, with its muscles unrelaxed and its heart unsubdued, the supremacy of the Gospel could not be realized. It was absolutely arrested and forbidden. For in essential and immovable antagonism this fronted the Gospel. Its kingdom, and law, and life were different. Its spirit was one of the most malign selfishness; its ambitions were fierce, its passions implacable, and its whole aim earthly. As soon, therefore, as the doctrine which Paul was proclaiming should emerge from the shelter of its early insignificance, and begin to declare itself a world-mastering principle, this mightiest empire of Time was its enemy; its 'enemy,' did I say? was its most terrific and consuming assailant. All the powers that pertained to it, so prodigious and omnipresent, as swayed by one will, inspired by one aim, and pushed to their purpose with relentless ferocity, were to converge at once on the work of arresting and then of eradicating the hated Christianity. The sharpness of swords and the darkness of prisons would be its swift and certain answer to every appeal which invoked for the Gospel the tolerance that it showed toward all other religions.—And so Paul knew that this as well, this mightiest establishment of government on the earth, this impregnable despotism which was touched by no fear, against which human power seemed vain, and to strike which was like trying to startle the stars—that this should also, in God's own time, be broken and wrecked, and "brought to nought."

But How should it be done? By what agencies should each of these prophesied victories, over Judaism, Heathenism, and the terrible iron-limbed Empire of Rome, be brought to pass? Not, he affirms, by the forces which already are at work in the world, in a manifest development, and with recognised

efficiency, and which may be still further augmented and multiplied, and made to bear on this new issue; not by armies revolting, or statesmen conspiring, or philosophers projecting new answers to Heathenism; not by nations reclaiming their ravaged rights, or the still existing Senate combining with the people to bury the haughty imperial prerogative in a cataclysm of revolution. The forces which God shall employ for this work, and to which He shall give a might irresistible, are simply thus far the "THINGS WHICH ARE NOT;" which exist but in embryo, and are not so far developed or recognised that men even despise them; the things which He alone can bring out of the secrets of thought and life, and make triumphant on their mission.—It is here that we encounter the whole meaning of the Apostle, and rise to the level of the theme he presents to us. And even with the cursory view we have taken of these so solid and gigantic establishments which confronted the Gospel, how apparent to us is the truthful energy of his expression. How immense the disparity between the great powers and institutes that were, and the agencies so recent and so imperceptible which were to overcome them!

For what were these agencies? To apprehend them at all in their primitive insignificance, we must go back, remember, of all that Christianity has done and has been, of all that it is in the world around us, and think of it as it was, in its wholly unembodied and impalpable life; back of churches, schools, and homes; before one temple had sprung toward heaven, in the novel uplift and delight of its architecture; before one treatise had wrought its principles into scientific statement, or clothed them in the grace and the majesty of letters; before any government had sought to incorporate its rules into statutes; before any one of all the great names now associated with it had become its bulwark in the popular confidence. In the simply spiritual elements it involved, it was set against this array which opposed it; and of all the auxiliaries which it

afterward gained, not one had as yet appeared on the earth. How utterly insignificant seemed then its force! How incredibly inadequate to the end to be accomplished, its tenuous, delicate, and precarious instruments!

The truths which had been taught the Apostles, and afterward recalled to them and unfolded more fully by the witness of the Spirit, and which were to be enshrined in evangelical narratives, not one of which had yet been written, which were to be expounded in a series of letters by the apostles to the churches, of which only those by Paul himself to Thessalonica had thus far been prepared,—*these* were the primary instruments to be used, with the oral proclamation of their principles and laws, for the spread of God's Kingdom, and the overthrow of whatever withstood its advance. And these!—it seemed like binding the lightning in the meshes and knots of metaphysical argument to set them to the work which thus lay before them. Epistles, and talks in the synagogue, against armies! The might that lay on letters and lips, against the might that ruled from thrones! The publication of doctrines, against establishments of power as rooted as the hills. The sneer of Pilate, "What is truth"?—'one scream of the trumpet, one rush of the legionaries, and teaching and teacher both are ended'!—the contemptuous carelessness of Gallio afterward, toward what seemed even to his practised mind a dispute about words and an antique law: these only represent the more than disdain, the sarcastic indifference tending only toward disgust, with which the ministers of the powers that were regarded such invisible weapons of thought.

The living energy of Christianity in the world, through the souls into which its truths should be transferred, throughout whose affections its charity should be shed, whose hopes should be kindled and their courage inspired by its high promises—this personal force of Christianity in the world, realizing the principles which epistles were to teach, and incarnating the spirit with which gospels were to glow: this was the second

of the agencies to be used for the triumph of God's Kingdom over all which withstood it. And this was just beginning to be realized, under the resolute ministry of the apostles, at a few of the points central to commerce and chief in population. The woman and the jailer converted at Philippi, who lead the long march of European Christendom toward the cross and its service, toward the crown and its splendors, had now some others associated with them. The woman named Damaris, and Dionysius the Areopagite, were doubtless still illustrating at Athens a more divine temper than Grecian homes had hitherto known, or Grecian philosophy ever had taught. And at Corinth, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Berea, Antioch, Jerusalem, and a few other points, individuals could be found who were beginning to illustrate, though as yet how imperfectly, the kindling contact of the Divine heart with theirs, the renovating force of the spirit of the Lord.

But this, thus far, if a power at all, was plainly a power only in embryo. And it might well be questioned, in the light of previous human experience, whether it were a power at all; whether, as matched against what was opposed to it, the characteristic spirit of the Christian was not an element of positive weakness and dangerous inefficiency. For it was meekness, arrayed against might; penitence and piety, against a jealousy and wrath which swept sea and land with military force. It was a charity which forgave all offences, against the infuriated passions of millions who were eager to commit them. It was a tender and scrupulous patience, that hardly asserted the common right of self-defence, against the impetuous and sanguinary onset of bands inured to rapine and blood; whom confession of helplessness could not conciliate, any more than an armed resistance could daunt them; who were only more savage in their tyranny over those who lay most entirely and plainly at their mercy. What possible chance, then, on mere rational grounds, for such a spirit, represented

in such feeble and imperfect communities, scattered so widely from each other, to withstand for an instant the real resistance, much more to overcome the marshalled onset, of all the powers arrayed against it! Words cannot surpass, they can hardly set forth, the apparent utterness of the impossibility. That the tuneful strains of Orphens' lyre should have tamed wild beasts, and stirred the trees and rocks to motion, could not have seemed to the sceptical philosopher in the least more improbable. It was as if a child of days would rival Jove; and flinging back smiles in answer to thunder-bolts, would seek to hurl him from his throne.

And yet these were the very agencies—these "Things which were not" in every sense — which were not regarded, and which hitherto existed only in germ, these Gospels and Epistles which were still to be written, these teachings and preachings which had scarcely commenced, these Christian forces in life and character which hardly thus far had appeared on the earth, which were not self-conscious enough to be formed as yet into separate communities, which could not be spoken of as one of the Fathers afterward spoke of them as 'verdant islets amid raging oceans,' but which now were only as scattered flowers casually dispersed on the surface of a sea that at any moment might swell with tempests,—*these* were the forces which God had chosen to bring to nought the "Things that were": the ancient, immense, and impregnable institutions, that stood in all their august might and tremendous effectiveness fronting the Gospel. Not with energy only, but with an exact precision of speech, had Paul then described them. The philosopher thought of them, if he thought of them at all, with a contempt only greater that that which he gave to the most absurd or childish of fables. The soldier regarded them less than the mists which had hovered last year around the crests of the hills. To the Jew, in comparison of his august forms and world-challenging miracles, they seemed as frail and shadowy as dreams. The whole wisdom of the

world anticipated as little an impression from them as we that the tiny animalculæ in the ocean, streaking its waves with phosphorescent glow, will arrest the revolution of shaft and wheel, and stay the steamship on its march.

Those secondary forces, too, which were in time to be evolved by God's plans, and confederated in effective alliance with these—although of course existing in embryo, they were if possible still more unrecognised, and even unrealized, when Paul was writing. How far they all were present yet, even to his inspired expectation, we cannot say; though some of them, no doubt, he plainly foresaw. The awakening spiritual longings under Judaism, at which his ministry to so large an extent was sympathetically aimed; the awakening moral instincts within Heathenism, whose premonitions he must have felt, of which Plutarch soon afterward became so illustrious and engaging an example; the gradual progress of moral decline in all the systems that were rooted in error and maintained by force, a decline which was vastly increased and accelerated when the heavenlier power came in controversy with them; the reäction which took place in even the hard-nerved Roman mind, when all the arts and all the terrors of a persecuting world were found unable to shake the hearts or silence the lips of humble men and holy women who still confessed Christ amid dungeons and flames, and under the reddening jaws of lions—a reäction which at last arrested persecution, when the final edict of Diocletian had been issued from that palace at Nicomedia beside whose ruins stands to-day a Christian church, and which came ten years later to its sudden consummation when Constantine took the cross for the ensign of the empire, and blazoned upon it the monogram of Christ;—all these were things which one by one came into development, each in its time, as the truths and the spirit of the Gospel went forward, and which had been parts, from the very beginning, of the enginery of God for the work to be accomplished, but which were as latent, when Paul looked

forth from Ephesus on the sea, as were the germs of modern oaks.

And those still additional procedures and events, also auxiliary to these more silent forces, which came as the comets come, with exactest precision when their time was accomplished,—already they were purposed in the mind of the Most High; already He saw their seeds unfolding; but how vaguely, if at all, were they thus far foreshown even to Paul; how entirely unsuspected were they yet by the world!

The destruction of Jerusalem by the arms of Titus, who when Paul was writing was a lad of fifteen, just recovering from the poison with which accident or design had nearly blighted his life, and who seems to have felt himself but the instrument of a Power which he could not comprehend and could not contravene, in his overthrow of the city; the consequent extinction of the Jewish nationality, the final obliteration of all distinctions between the tribes, and the scattering of their impoverished remnant to the ends of the earth:—this was a fact lying still as hidden among God's plans as the lightning which summer clouds secrete in their calm folds, but which came at the instant for which it was prepared, as the shattering bolt drops out of those clouds upon fortress or tree. And then, at last, the tremendous descent on the centres of the Empire of those northern barbarians who, when the Apostle dwelt at Ephesus, and for many years after, were divided among themselves, without arts or arms, without iron or money, strong only in undisciplined valor, and hardly more regarded by the Romans than the Indians or the Esquimaux now are by us, but who already were mysteriously pressed forward by some power from behind toward the seats of the tyranny which despised and forgot them, and who, when at length they broke upon the Empire, though destroying its structure, revitalized its blood, broke it up to recast it for the basis of modern European civilizations, and gave to Christianity such a sweep-

ing distribution as ages without this could not have accomplished:—this was another of those latent forces, then existing but in germ, not discovered or hinted to the minds of mankind, but which lay already in the reach of God's view, and was prepared at the crisis for the grasp of His will, for the overthrow of whatever opposed his evangel!

These were the instruments which He had selected, so utterly vague and formless hitherto, possibilities only and not actual powers, to accomplish his majestic and beneficent will. And through them, by His might, it did come to pass in the due time, as Paul had known and declared that it should, that the Gospel which seemed so slight a force when he was proclaiming it in the school of Tyrannus, and the agencies for which looked so frail and so few, did triumph illustriously and dominate for all time over the colossal institutions and influences which resisted its march. Where none had welcomed, there all at last accepted and honored it. Where every thing had opposed it, there every thing sped to do it service. The truths it uttered,—spreading electrically from mind to mind, with resistless velocity and atmospheric ubiquity they came to pervade and irradiate the nations. The spiritual life in the souls of believers,—rushing with fleet though silent contagion from heart to heart, and from people to people, it remoulded literature, it subsidized commerce, it changed the aspects and the tendencies of society, and it blossomed into churches as the hidden vegetative force of the spring bursts forth into flowers or shoots upward in trees. Judaism was surpassed, absorbed, and terminated, in a higher Religion, more adequate to man's wants, more illustrative of God's glory. Heathenism was not only broken down and exterminated on the scenes in which so long it had reigned, but it was made, thenceforth and forever, the veriest outcast of civilization. The Roman Empire was as finally extinguished as if the crust of the globe had been opened to swallow it up. And all was wrought—

this change at which the world still wonders, and which no other change recorded in history ever has paralleled—all was wrought, within a few centuries, by what at the outset had appeared so unreal or so ineffectual. God's might had crowned with an absolute victory what mankind had despised; and weakness, as used by Omnipotence, was supreme. The vanishing shadow, as it looked to men's eyes, had shaken and dissolved the earth-centred mountain. Doctrine and suffering had discomfited despotism. The market-places vocal, and the catacombs crowded, had been mightier than armies The Mamertine Prison had conquered the Capitol!

"The city of God is built," it has been said, "at the confluence of three great civilizations." It is built as well, let it never be forgotten, on the ruins of three prodigious, ambitious, and defiant establishments; a perverted Judaism, deriving vast strength from the truths it denied; an ancient, haughty, and universal Heathenism; a military Empire that encompassed the earth. And the forces which brought all these to nought, they were not descending squadrons of angels; they were not astute combinations of statesmen, the eloquence of scholars or the strategy of soldiers; they were forces which Paul could only describe, even in his day, a score of years after Christ had ascended, as "THINGS WHICH ARE NOT"!

FATHERS AND BRETHREN: I have tarried too long, I fear, for your patience, though not long enough for the demands of the theme, on this illustration of the words of the text; on this majestic demonstration in history of their profound and literal truth. And now, as we turn from Ephesus and Corinth, and leave the whole sphere of ancient life which they represent, let us take with us the thoughts with which the theme is instinct, and which fit themselves to our assembly.

Let us meditate anew on THE MAJESTY OF GOD, which is shown us here in full brightness of discovery, and which never should cease to inspire our hearts.—It is shown us in nature;

not so much amid phenomena the most dazzling or vast, as where he makes the force which looks smallest the lord of the greater, and where he sets the unseen energies to construct and control the combinations of matter; where he leaves the great laws which regulate the worlds mere invisible conceptions and melodious ideas of his archetypal and tranquil mind; where he poises the Universe, in the final analysis, on a globule of ether, beneath which stands only his 'word of power.' It is shown us in miracles; where the prophet's rod opens paths through the waves before whose recoil the chariots are as chaff; where the dust and the spittle are omnipotent through his will for removing the blindness that no surgery touches; where the tones of the voice are indued with a potency that masters the storm and raises the dead. It is shown us, as brightly as any where else, in this progress of the Gospel; where the humblest of energies become clothed with supremacy, when auxiliary to his aim; where is suddenly brought to light what had lain deeply hidden, that it may work his wondrous will; and where what appeared to have no existence is invested in his plans with irresistible efficiency.

What a resource for our hearts; what an unfailing stimulus to our too often fainting faith; what a ground of awe, and love, and wonder, more vivid and vast than the theophany upon Sinai, is the discovery thus made of Him! How plainly does prophecy become possible to him, who knows from the beginning all these occult forces which he is to marshall and make to determine the history of the world! And what a privilege is Prayer shown to be, when we place it in its relation to His supreme mind, to His all-controlling and absolute will!

And further, let us notice THE INTERPRETING POWER OF THIS SAME DIVINE ELEMENT in more recent history; the light which it casts on the subsequent changes that have marked the advance of Christianity in the world. Every where we shall find it, if we search for it aright, gleaming as a thread of

heavenly gold throughout the tangled and bloody annals that cover the interval between Paul's day and ours.

After he had long ascended to his rest, and the Christian temple long had stood on the very site of Nero's circus, there came that time beneath whose darkness history yet shivers, when all the fearful agencies of ill, which had apparently finally been scattered, seemed to rally again and re-combine, in different forms but with the same spirit, once more to withstand and overpower the Gospel; when Romanism was supreme, —the old Heathenism over, though baptized with new titles and adorned with new splendor,—over Western Europe; when Western Europe, and Romanism through it, was as mightily predominant as the Empire had been in human civilization; when Mohammedanism confronted it, with flaming sword and fanatical zeal, in the very seats where Judaism had been; and when Heathenism, bulwarked behind this false faith, remained undisturbed and even unquestioned over the remaining area of Asia. Again the whole power of the world seemed compacted, to crowd back the truth from the minds of mankind; and again there appeared, looming darkly above this, an almost unworldly malignity and energy, working tireless and triumphant for the same drear result. And again it seemed, as it had done of old, like looking to see the Alps melt away, or the continents and seas exchange their conditions, to expect such powers of ill to be vanquished, such prodigious establishments to be remoulded.

But again the possibilities which men had not considered, the germs of things which they had not discerned, were God's chosen and adequate instruments for his end; and he brought them out from their silent retreats, and made them victorious over all that opposed him. Kindling the primitive fires again in the souls of his faithful, by the word of his Gospel and the touch of his Spirit, he made their lips and lives to be vocal, as had been those of the primitive martyrs. He shot an inspiration over the nations, from the prisons of Lollards and

the stake of John Huss. He stirred new longings in Rome itself, after a higher Christian life. He made the progress of scientific thought contribute to the movement which thus constantly broadened. He awakened and invigorated, and brought to powerful development and action, the elements which worked toward national liberation and popular freedom, and made these auxiliary to his august plan. And then he gathered around these forces, nascent only as yet though full of promise, such an armory of instruments, suddenly revealed, as no other age had ever possessed. He unfolded the mystic might of the type, which makes human thought palpable. He brought to view other worlds by the telescope, and disclosed the true stellar and planetary system, to shake men's faith in the 'infallible' Church which had passionately denied this. He picked up this continent out of the seas, by the touch of that needle which is as his own finger of light, guiding the mariner through the darkness. He put the Bible, in the speech of the people, into the hands of all who could read, and made powerless beside it the priestly establishments which were based upon ignorance and bulwarked by force. He wrenched at last the whole of Northern Europe from the grasp of the Papacy, put a commerce into its hands wider than the ancients ever had dreamed of, and inspired it by degrees with a devotion to the truth unknown till then since the era of the Apostles. He peopled this continent with a Christian colonization, insignificant in its beginning, apparently almost accidental in its direction, but providential in its movement, and amazing in its growth. He drew out the energy from that Southern Europe which still remained Romanist, and equally from that fierce and aggressive Mohammedanism which so long had arrested the advance of the Gospel. And so he brought the world to this stage in which it meets us: with Protestantism prevalent and Romanism weak, both in Europe and here; with Mohammedanism shat-

tered in the centres of its power, and Heathenism pierced at multitudes of points by the progress of the Gospel; with the whole world now open to the march of the truth. And in all the long progress, his method has been that which the text first declared. He has conquered the powers that seemed irresistible, and overturned the establishments that looked solid as the earth, not by great forces at which all the world wondered, by monarchies and their might, by universities and their learning, by military movements and magnificent diplomacies, but just as of old by the things which 'were not' till He bade them to be; which existed but in germ, unrevealed to the knowledge or the hope of mankind.

It is the key which unlocks for us History. It is the method which shows God supreme, and still active in the world, and which associates distant ages in the long triumphal procession of his plans. He uses most these minor means, that we may hear his sounding steps reverberating on earth. He brings in ever the ultimate triumph of his truth and his Son, through the humbleness of the manger and the sorrows of the mount. He leaves the earthquake to shake the lands, and go vibrating on to the caverns where it hides. He leaves the wind to whirl over the surface, and mingle again in the quietness of the azure. He leaves the fire to blaze ineffectual into the heavens, and expire amid a smoke which the star-beams soon pierce. But he utters Himself in the 'still small voice.'

We cannot, I think, be content without noticing the relation which the truth thus declared to us by Paul sustains to our own Land and Time; the light which it casts on those purposes of God which already we feel to be wheeling through the mists, and articulating themselves amid the uproar and tumult, with which we are environed.

What is the lesson it teaches here? Is it that the Government which so long has been powerful is to be overturned by the startling Rebellion which so recently was not, but

which now has expanded to colossal proportions? that God *thus* designs to exalt the mean thing to a might unexpected, and to vindicate his supremacy through the triumph which he gives it over that which it seemed inadequate to shake? Nay! but the line in which he chooses to do this is the line, you observe, in which his ancient plans advance to the reduction of the world to allegiance to his Son. The things which are mighty, and which he overturns, are those which obstruct, not those which assist, this beneficent progress. And the feeble and obscure things to which he gives effectiveness, are those which are adapted by their nature to his work; which are marked from the beginning by a radical righteousness, though at the beginning most faint in development; whose expansion is therefore harmonious with his character, as well as directly auxiliary to his aim. And so this is not the lesson which is taught for our times by the text. A diverse application is that which it has for them.

Our Government in the past, so broad in its basis, so noble in its frame, builded so grandly on primordial truths, and seemingly riveted to them so firmly by the terms of its charter and the traditions of its founders, has still been confronted, and to some extent combined, in unnatural alliance, with another its opposite. Perverted by this, in many of its officers, laws, and operations, it has been rendered in some degree, it has been in peril of being rendered more largely, a bulwark of bondage, and not a grand power for popular liberation; the ally of a force which would shut the book of God to a race, and not of the faith which would open it to all men; the minister of a rule before which the family-institute is nothing, and not of the great idea of the Scriptures that the family inviolate is the solid corner-stone of all civilization, the first and most sacred of governments and of churches. It has seemed sometimes that this abnormal system—this marvellous complication of legalized lies, fronting the heavens in our late century—was so established in all our seats of ancient renown

and national power that nothing could shake it; that every institution, officer, law, must be subservient to its behests. Strong in the wealth produced for it by millions of laborers unrequited; crafty in the policy and effective in the tactics which leisure gave its leaders opportunity to master; domineering in its spirit and tenacious in its will as was the Roman Empire first, and the Papacy afterward; aiming at incessant renewal and expansion, and even with a certain religious fanaticism confusing its conscience and intensifying its passion,—it has looked to those who have studied it in the past too vast to be avoided, too strong to be subdued; almost certainly the master of our national policy for generations to come; whose pride and might would be only cemented with the progress of time, and to shake whose dominion were like breaking the Alleghanies into a prairie.

But God has taken the impalpable powers of thought and prayer, which alone remained to set against this, and has made them mighty as of old on his errand. The weak and despised, and the base things of earth, yea, even the things which 'were not' when he commenced, he has made in part victorious already over this gigantic and inveterate system. He is carrying them forward, let none of us doubt, to their certain consummation. If we are true to ourselves and to Him, it is SLAVERY that is going down, not our benign and venerated GOVERNMENT, in this fierce struggle which agitates the land. It is Slavery which is to disappear in the end from its last stronghold within nominal Christendom. The truths that started in so much feebleness, that gained so tardy and reluctant an acceptance from even the minds which most were attuned to them, that have had to encounter such constant opposition, and whose power to overcome it has seemed so slight—they have mastered many mechanisms, and enthroned themselves in pulpits; they have found multitudinous voices in literature; they have organized themselves by degrees into statesmanship; they have had their martyrs here and there, as

all great truths must have to be vindicated as such; they have reached and grappled the popular conscience, inspired and directed political action, and at last have placed their nearest representatives among public men in the chief seats of power, and have crowded the imperious and exasperated system which has watched their advance, and has frantically resisted the approach of its end, to a point where it snatches up arms in rebellion, and makes civil war to blaze and thunder for the first time in our history—and also for the last !—along the mid line of our peaceful confederacy.

And here, as of old, other instruments that were not till God bade them to be, are now made auxiliary to the spiritual forces of the truth and of righteousness. The wondrous uprising of an intense patriotism, which flashed with actual lightning-speed from New-York to the Pacific, from the shades of Katahdin to Californian valleys, when the outcry went forth that by bullets and bombs the old imperial starry flag, riddled and rent, but undisgraced, had been hurled from the bastion; the amazing military development that has followed; the unexampled enthusiasm of the whole Northern mind for the maintenance of the government, and the extent to which already it is impregnated with a principled and determined detestation of Slavery; the immense expansion of the culture of cotton beneath the vast stimulus which now is applied to it, preparing it every where to spring up more profusely, till it binds in the filaments of its delicate fibres that system which thought to command the world by a monopoly of its staple—all these are things which were not at first, which were not a year since, which not the most prescient could have anticipated, but through which and by which God will vindicate his supremacy, and overwhelm that which would hinder his Gospel from largest publication.

As in all our career—wherein a faith that seemed so obscure surmounted at first the obstacles that were mighty, wherein the scattered and fragmentary colonies humbled the

empire which threatened at the outset to crush them by its weight, wherein the inventions that subdue to man's use the unfatigueable powers of nature have arisen to displace and replace the old instruments in so swift a succession,—as in all our career, so here, most of all, shall the principle of the text be vindicated to us: when the final demolition of Slavery shall have come; and when, as Pericles built the Odeum, for great musical performances, out of the masts of Persian vessels captured at Marathon, so the generations which come after us shall find that that magnificent and durable temple which is here to be erected to Universal Freedom, and within which shall arise, age after age, the Te Deums of millions, has taken its stateliest proportions and pillars from the shattered strength and the vanquished rage of this present Rebellion!

And, finally: how the whole pressure of the theme bears instantly and always on OUR MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE; and what an animating view does it open of the prospects of this work in the ages to come! We cannot close but with this thought.

Last year, as was fit, our minds were turned backward along the magnificent march of the work up to that anniversary; and with grateful hearts and praising lips we could but exclaim, at the end of the Half-century, "What hath God wrought"! We will not forget the successes then recited. We will not let slip from the hold of our minds the great memories then awakened. Our thoughts and hearts are anchored still to the colleges, churches, and schools of the prophets, in which this Society had its commencement. Our tender recollections cling still to the homes amid whose piety has been nurtured the faith which has signalized its annals; to the graves where so much devoted life, the dignity of man and the beauty of woman, has gone down in its service from the vision of men; to the scenes which are forever consecrated, by the labors of its teachers, and the sacrifice of its martyrs. Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him who hath raised it

up, and girded and hallowed it, and given it His help! Its past is secure; and in the clear effulgence of that our souls grow bright.

But standing to-night at the end of the first year of its second Half-century, and assembled as we are in this beautiful city which was not in existence when its labors commenced—looking out on these regions, then almost untrodden, whose lakes and prairies and river-vallies, stretching on to the Pacific, are teeming now with so copious a life, which is organizing so fast into Christian communities,—it is not possible but that we look forward, and anticipate what the present period, in its swift circuit, shall also bring. And so looking on, what invigorating influences rain upon us from the text! What vistas of glorious and immeasurable advancement for the Kingdom of Christ open in bright perspective before us!

It is inspiring to think of those far-scattered preachers, some of whose associates are with us to-night, who are carrying the great truths which apostles first bore, to distant lands; again establishing missionary churches; again reducing the languages that are Pagan, and that have been from the start, to the mastery of Christ. From city and jungle, from coral islands and the echoing marge of ancient continents, we know their thoughts and hearts turn hither; and to them all our souls send back their glad All-Hail! But it is, if possible, more inspiring still, not to our affection, but to our courage, to think of those impersonal forces, unknown as yet even by us, which God has marshalled for his work; which cannot die, and shall not fail, and which he will use, each in its time, for his fit end. It is wonderful that he should have set in Hindostan, two hundred and fifty years ago, in such uttermost weakness, and with such absolute unconsciousness on the part of his instruments, the seminal principle of that English dominion which, beginning when Elizabeth irradiated England with the brilliance of her reign, hath waited for its fulfilment

to the day of her latest and loveliest successor. It is wonderful that Australia, first seen by the Portuguese, and whose neighboring islands, with the glittering name of Islands of Gold, were first linked to Europe by the commerce of the Spaniard, should still have remained for two centuries and a half unoccupied by settlements, till there as well English colonies were planted, and English influence made supreme. But who does not see that the Protestant energy which pervades those vast regions is to be henceforth the dominant power in Asia and the Pacific; and that the beginnings, so feeble and so distant, held in them the germs of Christ's ultimate victory? It was not known, when the missionary spirit first awoke in this country, that the era of steam-navigation was at hand, to give to commerce world-wide enlargement and lock all lands in alliances of trade. It was not known, when all Christian missions began to need a rapid expansion, that the picking up of a flake or two of gold in the dry beds of streams with which Indians and Mexicans had long been familiar, was to augment the wealth of this country and of Europe by incredible additions, and to furnish the resources for which millions had been praying. But so has God made the things unexpected, and the things that looked trivial, the things which he alone foresaw, to fit into and further his on-working plans. And so shall he do throughout the future.

The obstacles before us seem great sometimes, but how small they all are beside those which already have been overcome; and how certain it is that even already the forces are at work, not yet to be recognized probably by us, before which they all shall come to nought; before which worships, castes, and despotisms, shall melt as melts the morning mist; before which new men shall spring to action, new routes of travel and trade be opened, new nations be inspired with evangelical fervor, our country be made more than ever heretofore a missionary land, and the fierceness of the world be subdued unto Christ.

Our grand prerogative is it to know this: that all things coming are our helpers; that as fast as the possible becomes realized and actual, it assists our advance! That which statesmen always fear, is these possibilities which they can not yet measure. What makes the hearts of monarchs quake, amid palaces and armies, is the chance that already, among the secret seeds of things, is germinating that which shall threaten their thrones. But all these boundless possibilities are ours. These germinating influences, every one of them is for us. God's mind controls and chooses all. They are indeed his selected auxiliaries, for the furtherance of his plans. And we have but to advance in the line which He marks out, to find them all our unwearied fellow-workers; to find the Half-century of missionary history which we have commenced, full even to the end of still culminating successes! Over every discouragement, and to every fresh victory, He shall lift us by means which we least had anticipated. The most solid of the barriers that still stand in our path, already the unseen and impalpable agencies are conspiring for its downfall. And the great revolutions which, when they come, shall startle and amaze us, lie really infolded already, did we know it, in forces and causes which we have not discerned.

Let us know, then, beforehand, what the issue is to be, and take hold on it with our faith. Let us look upon Nature, Commerce, the Arts, on the movements of states, the changes of dynasties, and feel that in all of them lie hid our helpers. Let us never be discouraged, and never be timid, till the end is attained, or till our life closes. And let us know that when the end has fully come; when the kingdoms of this world are all the Lord's, in loyal faith; when every shackle at last is loosed, and every home is free and secure; when from each hill to every other there rings abroad the shout of joy, and over every outstretched plain there streams the Gospel's radiant morn; when all the world securely rests in perfect love, and that various beauty which no autumn can typify has robed its

coasts in hues and lights which are the reflection of that great Bow bended of God around His throne—it shall be seen emblazoned in light on the long progress, it shall be heard resounding in music from every part of the vast triumph: "THE THINGS THAT WERE"—so ancient, proud, and full of might—by "THE THINGS THAT WERE NOT," they are all brought to nought!

God make the truth our teacher here; and make its fruits our glory there; and unto Him be all the praise! Amen.